

Forty-six years ago today, Congress transformed the face of education in this country by passing the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA). Through its pledge to promote equal access to opportunities for all children by funding primary and secondary schooling, ESEA was an essential component of our nation's war on poverty and continues to demand high standards and accountability in America's public schools. Congress has continued to reauthorize the ESEA, a true testament to its impact and importance.

ESEA was most recently reauthorized as the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) and received widespread bipartisan support in its endorsement of standards-based education reform. NCLB continued to reflect our nation's commitment to academic excellence, and nothing could be more integral to the health of our society. As the global community grows more competitive with each passing year, it is crucial that we equip all Americans with the education and skills they need to be productive and capable players in the world marketplace.

In the years following NCLB, federal funding of education saw an increase, but we still have a long way to go before America's students are receiving the support for the educational opportunities they truly deserve. On March 14, 2010, the Obama administration released a blueprint proposing several key improvements that aim to reform NCLB from a one-size-fits-all, pass-fail approach into one that is more well-rounded, focusing on student growth and school progress as indicators of success. In our fight to close the achievement gap, it is important that states adopt college and career-ready standards, and that achievement be measured by more than just a test score. Additionally, we must recognize education as the very foundation upon which all aspects of society depend, and the new blueprint treats it as such. By taking a transformative attitude toward support, incentives, and leadership that invites families, students, educators, and business and community leaders to participate collaboratively in the betterment of public schools, the new vision for ESEA offers much to look forward to.

It is my sincere hope that Congress continues its long-standing tradition of investing in a bright future for all of us by reauthorizing, reforming, and fully funding NCLB/ESEA this year. I am a firm believer that knowledge is power, and through continued support of ESEA, we can empower all of America's children to reach their full potential and to achieve success in the classroom and in life.